

Tamotamaparāyana sutta

The discourse of Darkness

According to the discourse of darkness which comes in Anguttara Nikaya, four types of people can be found in the world. Which four? One in darkness who is headed for darkness, one in darkness who is headed for light, one in light who is headed for darkness, and one in light who is headed for light.

*“Cattārome, bhikkhave, puggalā santo saṃvijjamānā lokasmiṃ. Katame cattāro?
Tamo tamaparāyaṇo, tamo jotiparāyaṇo, joti tamaparāyaṇo, joti jotiparāyaṇo.*

1. Tamotamaparayana : From Darkness to Darkness.

“How is one the type of person in darkness who is headed for darkness? There is the case where a person is born into a lower family—the family of a scavenger, a hunter, a basket-weaver, a wheelwright, or a sweeper—a family that is poor, with little food or drink, living in hardship, where food & clothing are hard to come by. And he is ugly, misshapen, stunted, & sickly: half-blind or deformed or lame or crippled. He doesn’t receive any [gifts of] food, drink, clothing, or vehicles; garlands, perfumes, or ointments; bedding, shelter, or lamps. He engages in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. This is the type of person in darkness who is headed for darkness.

2. Tamojotiparayana: From Darkness to Light.

“How is one the type of person in darkness who is headed for light? There is the case where a person is born into a lower class family—the family of a scavenger, a hunter, a basket-weaver, a wheelwright, or a sweeper—a family that is poor, with little food or drink, living in hardship, where food & clothing are hard to come by. And he is ugly, misshapen, stunted, & sickly: half-blind or deformed or lame or crippled. He doesn’t receive any [gifts of] food, drink, clothing, or vehicles; garlands, perfumes, or ointments; bedding, shelter, or lamps. He engages in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct. Having engaged in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the good destination, the heavenly world. This is the type of person in darkness who is headed for light.

3. Jotitatamaparayana: From Light to Darkness.

“How is one the type of person in light who is headed for darkness? There is the case where a person is born into an upper class family—a noble warrior family, a priestly family, a prosperous householder family—a family that is rich, with much wealth, with many possessions, with a great deal of money, a great many accoutrements of wealth, a great many commodities. And he is well-built, handsome, extremely inspiring, endowed with a lotus-like complexion. He receives [gifts of] food, drink, clothing, & vehicles; garlands, perfumes, & ointments; bedding, shelter, & lamps. He engages in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. This is the type of person in light who is headed for darkness.

4. Jotijotiparayana: From Light to Light.

“And how is one the type of person in light who is headed for light? There is the case where a person is born into an upper class family—a noble warrior family, a priestly family, a prosperous householder family—a family that is rich, with much wealth, with many possessions, with a great deal of money, a great many accoutrements of wealth, a great many commodities. And he is well-built, handsome, extremely inspiring, endowed with a lotus-like complexion. He receives [gifts of] food, drink, clothing, & vehicles; garlands, perfumes, & ointments; bedding, shelter, & lamps. He engages in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct. Having engaged in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the good destination, the heavenly world. This is the type of person in light who is headed for light.

Among those four types of persons the Buddha appreciates second and fourth types of persons. Even though there are disadvantages in birth, people who were born in this period of time have a good chance to develop their spirit to the maximum level practicing the Buddha's message. The main purpose of everyone should be to overcome suffering and purify mind. As much as we listen to the Buddha's message, we can understand that why we suffer and the way how to get rid of suffering.

If we suffer any time, our mind is with anger or desire and ignorance. On the other side, if we are really happy, our mind is away from anger and desire. If someone can completely overcome ignorance or delusion, he or she can be completely away from suffering.

According to Buddhism, all unwholesome thoughts can be included into three. They are;

1. Desire (*Lobha*)
2. Anger (*Dosa*)
3. Delusion (*Moha*)

These are the main defilements which disturb our peace of mind. If we have more unwholesome emotions, it means we have more suffering. If we have less defilement, it means we have less suffering. If somebody needs to live with more happiness, he has to reduce these defilements. If someone is clever to decrease these three defilements completely from his mind, he can overcome suffering and unsatisfactoriness completely in this life itself. Desire means the attachment or lust, craving or greed. Anger means conflict or ill will. Delusion means unknowing of the world reality or ignorance of impermanence.

Our success in the path of liberation depends on how far we have reduced these three unwholesome thoughts. We can see two levels on the path of reducing defilements. First level is the surface level. It is a temporary solution. The second level is deep level. It is the ultimate and permanent solution. In the second level, our vision should change completely into the correct way that helps to eradicate defilements completely.

By listening to the Buddha's teaching, we gradually go forward on the path of liberation. In the first level of reducing defilements, we can practice generosity to reduce desire. When we are ready to donate something to others concerning their qualities or needs, our mind is free from desire. Then greed in mind gradually decreases. Also, if we can practice purity of the body parts, we are able to overcome craving and lustful desire with people. When we practice loving kindness for all people in the world, anger also decreases. We mostly lose our inner peace because of anger. Also people mostly suffer because of anger. Practicing loving kindness helps us to reduce anger and ill will. That is why the Buddha has recommended practicing loving kindness at the very beginning on the path of liberation. As the result of practicing loving kindness, we begin to see all beings as our only child. Then most of our conflicts with people go away. This attitude is the highest in the spiritual development. Practicing loving kindness is one of the signs that we are on the path of liberation from suffering and unsatisfactoriness. To decrease delusion, we should be knowledgeable about the world and ourselves. The Karmic law that means what we have done in our past lives and we do in this life effects our future lives as well as this life. The Karmic law is a big shadow which acts behind us. If we have this knowledge about the karmic law, our patience gradually increases when problems come to our life. Also, the knowledge that everything is impermanent should increase with developing wisdom. The experience that we receive through our senses arises and ceases at the moment. If we have this understanding, we are able to live equally in sufferable or pleasurable situations.

In the second level, we go deeper to reduce defilements permanently. Here, knowledge, reflection and practice are very important. We have attachment and anger because of

unknowing of experience. The nature of all our experiences is instant. The experience that we receive with our senses arises and ceases at the moment according to conditions. When conditions are together, the experiences as forms, sounds, smell, taste, touch, mental formations arise at the moment. The experience doesn't come to the present from the past. And it doesn't go to the future from the present. Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence. (අනුක්ඛං සම්භුතං භුක්ඛං න භවිස්සති). When conditions separate, the experience ceases without anything remaining. Every thought arises at the moment and ceases at the moment effecting to next thought, but the present thought doesn't go to the future thought. This is the reality that we experience every moment. However, because of our ignorance we think that the experience remains after we experience it. We live in the ceased experience when we think about that experience. This is the main cause of suffering. If we have this knowledge about the cause of suffering, we reflect on it again and again in our daily life. And also we try to eradicate defilements permanently by practicing the path leading to the cessation from suffering. To understand this reality we should practice the three disciplines the Buddha has kindly advised.

They are;

1. Virtue (*Seela*)
2. Tranquility (*Samādhi*)
3. Wisdom ā (*Paññā*)

With the clear knowledge of the cessation of suffering, we develop self-discipline in our speech and behavior. Before we do or speak something, we reflect on it again and again whether it is good or bad, right or wrong, whether it is useful in this life and here after. As much as we have this discipline in our behavior, we have no mistakes. We can remember our life with a pleasant mind because of our good behavior. This discipline in our behavior and speech helps us to go forward in the path of purification practicing meditation purifying the mind. Virtue or moral conduct is the foundation of the spiritual path. Therefore the Buddha has mostly pointed out the importance of practicing virtue. Discipline in senses is also very important and useful for a successful moral life. Because of virtuous life we are honored in the society where we live.

In purification of the mind, we mainly use two meditation techniques that are tranquility (or concentration) and insight. In the tranquility meditation, we keep our mind with a particular good thought. As a result of concentrated mind, we can live for a long time without suffering and stress, but it is not permanent and it can be changed. Here we practice and develop our awareness especially in mind and body. We practice to do all kinds of activities mindfully. Mindfulness is one of the most important qualities that we have to develop for purification of our mind. Also mindfulness helps us to keep our mind in the present moment. The nature of our mind is going to the past and future without awareness. By practicing

tranquility meditation, we train our mind to live in the present moment with mindfulness. And when mind goes to the past or future we are aware of the mind. There are forty techniques in Buddhism to develop mindfulness. When we practice those techniques with right understanding, we don't stop in concentration. We go forward seeing world reality which is impermanence.

Concentration is not enough to eradicate defilements completely. That is why Buddhism advises us to develop another step that is insight meditation for permanent happiness. Here, with the concentrated mind, we reflect on all kinds of things that mental and physical on three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). They are;

- i. Impermanence (Anicca - අනිත්‍ය)
- ii. Unsatisfactoriness (Dukkha - දුක්ඛ)
- iii. Selflessness (Anatta - අනාත්ම)

We reflect again and again on these three characteristics of existence (Tilakkhana-ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). As a result of practicing this world reality, we develop wisdom with the knowledge of impermanence. Simultaneously, we develop five qualities which are confidence (Saddhā-සද්ධා), effort (Viriya-වීරිය), mindfulness (Sati-සති), concentration (Samādhi-සමාධි) and wisdom (Pannā-පඤ්ඤා). As the result of practicing The Noble Eightfold Path with mindfulness and wisdom, we gradually reach the real happiness decreasing defilements. Final experience of this is living in the present moment with full awareness seeing arising and ceasing without any desirable attachment or destruction. It means we have overcome unsatisfactoriness and suffering. As soon as we get any experience in our senses, we are able to see them as impermanent. We understand that it was not there before the experience, and also nothing remaining after the experience. Every moment of our experience arises when conditions are together, and the experience ceases when conditions separate. This is the ultimate truth that we have to realize for the ultimate goal that is the liberation, Nibbana. If we are clever to reflect on the impermanence that always happens, our wisdom increases gradually. When we are on this contemplation, we have overcome suffering. Simultaneously, we have overcome aging, sickness, lamentation, death and rebirth.

This is the path that leads to reduce three defilements. As the result of practicing the three disciplines, we gradually decrease unwholesome thoughts and achieve the real happiness. This is the real success in our life because it helps us to live in the noble bliss of liberation. Practicing three discipline and reducing three defilements is the real refuge to our lives. This is the way how to go to light from light or darkness.

May The Triple Gem Bless You!

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